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The Hollywood Reporter

AFM DAILY №3 NOVEMBER 7, 2014

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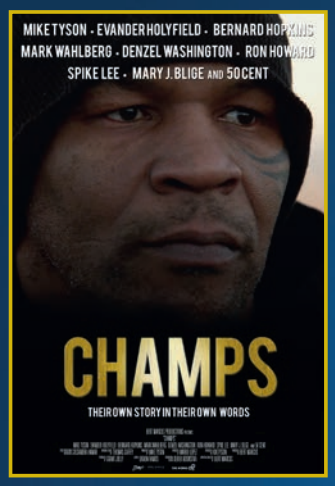
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CHAMPS
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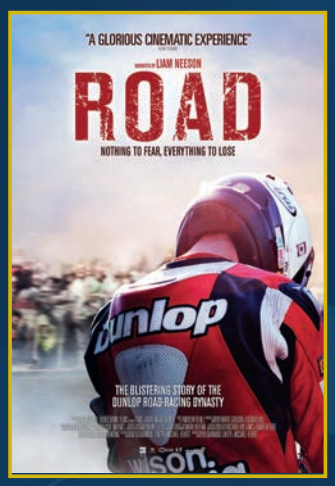

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THE WORKS

NOVEMBER 7, 2014
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The Hollywood Reporter

SANTA MONICA WEATHER AND HIGH TEMPS

TODAY 82° F 28° C

TOMORROW 82° F 28° C

TARANTINO: INDIES ONLY FOR *HATEFUL*

By Scott Roxborough

After sleeping with the studios with *Django Unchained* and *Inglourious Basterds*, **Quentin Tarantino** is getting back to his indie roots with his upcoming film, *The Hateful Eight*.

The Weinstein Co., which is producing the director's Western as well as handling world sales at AFM, is only accepting offers from independent distributors for the film. This contrasts with *Django Unchained*, which Columbia Pictures co-produced and Sony bowed in multiple territories including Japan, Germany and the U.K., and *Inglourious Basterds*,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jessica Chastain arrived at the Dolby Theatre on Thursday as her film *A Most Violent Year* opened the AFI Fest.

Saban Puts *Trust* in Cage

By Pamela McClintock

Continuing to fill out its slate, **Haim Saban**'s Saban Films has acquired North American rights to crime thriller *The Trust*, starring **Nicolas Cage**.

Brothers **Ben** and **Alex Brewer** are directing the film, about two crooked cops who discover a hidden safe, the contents of which will lead them down a deadly road of corruption. The film, now in preproduction, will shoot in Las Vegas.

"The script for *The Trust* was incredibly captivating and tells such a riveting story," said Saban president **Bill Bromiley**.

Bromiley and **Ness Saban** negotiated on behalf of Saban Films and Highland Film Group on behalf of the producers. **Adam Hirsch** and **Ben Brewer** wrote the script.

Molly Hassell and **Braxton Pope** produced *The Trust*, with **Mike Nilon** executive producing alongside Has-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

STUDIOS WARY OF POLITICAL FARE

Why are the majors passing on topical projects like Oliver Stone's Snowden biopic? Insiders say it has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with money *By Scott Roxborough*

Open Road's deal with Wild Bunch to take U.S. rights to **Oliver Stone**'s **Edward Snowden** biopic highlight a growing trend in ripped-from-the-headlines features making their way to market.

The project, which will see **Joseph Gordon-Levitt** play the NSA whistleblower, is only one of a slew of politically-themed dramas featuring potentially polemic topics heading into production. They include Paramount's *13 Hours*, a look at the attacks on the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, which **Michael Bay** is in talks to direct; **Jon Stewart**'s *Rosewater*, about a journalist jailed in Tehran; and **George Clooney**'s in-development *Hack Attack*, about the British phone-hacking scandal.

At AFM, British sales group Manifest closed multiple presales on its planned **Ronald Reagan** biopic, selling Latin American rights to Sun Distribution Group. The film is based on **Paul Kengor**'s historic books about The Gipper, including the best-selling *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism*. **Howard Klausner** (*Space Cowboys*) is writing the screenplay for the film, budgeted at $35 million, which is conceived as the story of Reagan's career as told from the perspective of an envious, but admiring, ex-KGB officer.

But politics and headline-grabbing controversy do not always translate into box-office success. **Kathryn Bigelow**'s thriller *Zero Dark Thirty*, about the hunt for **Osama Bin Laden**, grossed $133 million worldwide, but **Bill Condon**'s *The Fifth Estate*, featuring **Benedict Cumberbatch** as Wikileaks founder **Julian Assange**, flopped, grossing $8.6 million globally and a measly $3.2 million domestically for Buena Vista.

That may be one reason why the major studios are steering clear of overtly political titles.

According to insiders, Stone's Snowden film was shopped to several Hollywood studios ahead of AFM, but no deal materialized.

"I think *Fifth Estate* made people nervous, to be honest," says one studio executive.

Another studio source said such movies based on real-life events have to be made at the right price. "There is a version that works," he said. "You'll get cache in the awards space, and you won't be too exposed financially."

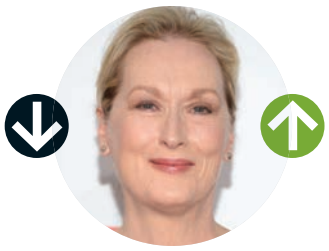
One European buyer, who said the Snowden biopic "isn't on the top of my list," questioned whether audiences would pay to see a story on film that "they've seen a hundred times already on the news."

Indeed, Stone's screenplay, based both on **Luke Harding**'s nonfiction book *The Snowden Files: The*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THR HEAT INDEX

KEANU REEVES
The *Matrix* star is getting raves — and decent box office — for his latest outing, *John Wick*, and is headlining sci-fi actioner *Replicas* from Mark Gao's Fundamental Films, one of the hottest titles at AFM.



MERYL STREEP
Her AFM project, *Florence*, is generating plenty of heat among U.S. and foreign buyers, although a steep asking price of $15 million in the U.S. is dampening dealmaking.

KNOW YOUR DEALMAKER

RON GELL
vp international sales
The exec at faith-based Pure Flix/Quality Flix has gotten distribs to believe in *God's Not Dead*. It's been picked up by buyers including Signature in the U.K., Synca in Japan and Sun & Canzion for Latin America.

MEANWHILE, IN THE REAL WORLD ...

► **John Lasseter**, who helmed the first two *Toy Story* films for Pixar, will return for a fourth movie in the franchise, to hit theaters June 16, 2017.

► Beloved Brit period soap ***Downton Abbey*** will return for a sixth season, with production on the ITV and Carnival Films series to begin early next year.

► **The Walt Disney Co.** narrowly exceeded analyst expectations Thursday, posting $12.38 billion in revenue and 89 cents per share in earnings for its fiscal fourth quarter, the fourth straight period in which it has registered a record.

EIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

which Universal's global arm UIP handled in most of Europe as well as in territories such as Australia and Argentina.

Buyers reported Tarantino explicitly requested that only indies be allowed to bid on *Hateful Eight*, which stars **Samuel L. Jackson**, **Kurt Russell**, **Jennifer Jason Leigh**, **Demian Bichir**, **Walton Goggins**, **Tim Roth**, **Michael Madsen** and **Bruce Dern**.

The film will begin shooting in Telluride next month.

It is unclear whether Tarantino had issues with the studios' handling of his past two films or if he simply wishes to reward the indie distributors who have supported him in the past. Before *Inglourious Basterds*, all of the director's movies were distributed almost exclusively through independent companies worldwide.

It likely helps that *Hateful Eight*, with a reported budget of $44 million, is substantially cheaper than either *Django* or *Basterds*, making it easier for indies to get on board.

It certainly seems as if TWC will have no problem selling out the movie. The company is believed to be fielding multiple offers from all major international territories and is expected to wrap things up by this weekend. THR

TRUST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sell Free Productions' **Arianne Fraser** and **Delphine Perrier**. Highland is handling worldwide sales.

The deal comes as Saban Film prepares to release its first feature, **Tommy Lee Jones**' awards contender *The Homesman*, starring **Hilary Swank**,**Tim Blake Nelson**, **James Spader**, **John Lithgow** and **Meryl Streep**. The specialty film opens in select runs Nov. 14.

Saban Films picked up the *Homesman* at Cannes, followed by several buys at Toronto, including **Sarik Andreasyan**'s action thriller *American Heist*, starring **Hayden Christensen** and **Adrien Brody**, and *The Forger*, starring **John Travolta**, **Christopher Plummer** and **Tye Sheridan**. THR

Cage

Politics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man and the upcoming novel *Time of the Octopus*, from Snowden's Russian lawyer **Anatoly Kucherena**, covers much of the same ground as *Citizenfour*, the new documentary from **Laura Poitras**, who, together with journalist **Glenn Greenwald**, met with Snowden in Hong Kong, where he turned over thousands of classified government documents.

The very topicality of political films also can prove a liability.

"What's in the news right now might be forgotten in two years time when the film comes out," says Bloom president **Alex Walton**, whose hot AFM title, the **Kevin Spacey**/**Michael Shannon**-starrer *Elvis & Nixon*, keeps its politics safely couched in the past. That film, from director **Liza Johnson**, looks at the famous 1970 meeting in the Oval Office between the King of Rock and Roll and the conservative president. "There is politics in the film, but it is more a human story, which makes it easier for a film like this to appeal to a mainstream audience," Walton says.

Another veteran sales agent, however, said Stone's Snowden film, if properly marketed, could have broad mainstream appeal.

"It's got Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and the story, at its core, is an espionage thriller. If they push that element of it, it could be a winner," he said.

Pamela McClintock contributed to this report.

Alibaba Film Chief Outlines Growth Strategy

By Clifford Coonan

Chinese online giant Alibaba will use its network of sales platforms to help boost its film business, expand its non-box-office revenue and promote video-on-demand, the group's movie boss said.

Alibaba CEO **Jack Ma**, during a visit to Los Angeles last week, described his firm as "the world's biggest entertainment company," and he's gung-ho on expanding the company he founded.

Representatives from China's tech firms, including the big three Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent, the so-called BAT companies, are doing the rounds at American Film Market this year as they seek to expand their relationship with Hollywood.

Speaking at the 9th China Young Generation Film Forum this week, **Zhang Qiang**, a former China film executive who jumped ship to become head of Alibaba Pictures, outlined the group's strategy.

"Alibaba has 800 million users on the firm's Alipay, Taobao and Tianmao sales platforms, which offers huge potential," he said.

Alibaba in June bought 60 percent of ChinaVision Media Group in Hong Kong for $804 million.

Technology is transforming the traditional channels of promotion and distribution in the country and reforming such upstream sectors as financing and production. As an example, Zhang said that its Maoyan unit had presold $24.54 million worth of tickets for the Chinese film comedy *Breakup Buddies*. He said Alibaba would expand its film sales system nationwide to boost online ticket presales.

The group is also keen to expand revenue beyond the box office. "Ninety percent of film revenue in China relies on box office, and the whole ancillary market remains open season. In the future, you could scan a code to buy ancillary items on Taobao, Tianmao or another Alibaba platform," he said.

Zhang said he was confident VOD also would expand as part of the group's offering and that high-definition, easy-to-buy content would beat pirates. THR

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Jacke Chan and Fan Bingbing

SHANGHAI MEDIA BACKS *SKIPTRACE*

By Clifford Coonan

Shanghai New Culture Media Group will co-finance *Skiptrace*, an action adventure U.S-China co-production directed by **Renny Harlin** and starring **Jackie Chan**, **Johnny Knoxville** and **Fan Bingbing**.

Shanghai New Culture Media announced that they would join China's Talent International Film Co. and Dasym Entertainment at the American Film Market.

The story of *Skiptrace*, based on an idea by Chan, centers on a good Hong Kong detective (Chan) whose niece (Fan) gets into trouble with a crime syndicate run by a man the detective has been chasing for a decade. The cop is forced to track down the one person who can help save his niece — a fast-talking American gambler (Knoxville) — and bring him to Hong Kong after a trek across China. Knoxville replaces **Seann William Scott** in the film.

Harlin previously directed *Die Hard 2*, *Long Kiss Goodbye* and this year's *Legend of Hercules*. The movie is produced by Talent International, Dasym Media and Chan, along with **Esmond Ren**, **Charlie Coker**, **Damien Saccani** and **David Gerson**.

SNC's **Yang Zhenhua** and **Liu Xiaolin** will join as executive producers, while **Gao Qun** of SNC and **Wang Lifeng** of Xing Xing will serve as co-executive producers.

SNC is handling world sales outside of China for the film. Former Exclusive exec **Alex Walton** and **Ken Kao**'s Bloom is handling international sales on the film.

Exclusive Media was previously behind the movie but since its disintegration, parent company Investment Strategies B.V. has moved it to subsidiary Dasym. THR

Beta Grabs World Sales on Watson's *Colonia*

The thriller from director Florian Gallenberger also stars Daniel Bruhl and Mikael Nyqvist

By Scott Roxborough

German outfit Beta Cinema has picked up world sales rights on **Florian Gallenberger**'s *Colonia*, a thriller starring *Harry Potter* alum **Emma Watson**, *Rush* star **Daniel Bruhl** and **Mikael Nyqvist** of original, Swedish, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Bruhl

The story of the film, which Gallenberger co-wrote with German screenwriter **Torsten Wenzel**, follows Lena (Watson) and Daniel (Bruhl), a young couple who get caught up in the Chilean military coup of 1973, when right wing forces backed by the CIA overthrew the country's democratically elected president **Salvador Allende.**

Daniel is kidnapped by **Augusto Pinochet**'s secret police and Lena has to track him down to a no-go area in the south of the country, the so-called Colonia Dignidad. On the surface, the Colonia is a charitable mission run by lay preacher Paul Schafer (Nyqvist) but, no one, in fact, has ever escaped from there. Lena joins Schafer's cult in order to find Daniel and help him escape.

Beta handled sales on Gallenberger's WWII drama *John Rabe*. The German director won an Oscar for best short live-action film in 2000 for *Quiero ser (I want to be...)*

Gallenberger's longtime producing partner **Benjamin Herrmann** is producing *Colonia* through his Berlin-based shingle Majestic.

The film is currently shooting in Germany before moving to South America this year. Majestic will bow the film in Germany in October 2015. UTA Independent Film Groupwill be co-representing domestic right to the project together with Beta. THR

Watson

MIIKE'S *BODY* GOES TO SHOUT!

By Etan Vlessing

The Shout! Factory has picked up the North American rights to **Takashi Miike**'s *Over Your Dead Body* from Mongrel International and Celluloid Dreams.

The deal, unveiled at AFM, has the media distributor securing digital, home entertainment, broadcast and theatrical rights to the prolific Japanese director's latest film. Shout! Factory plans a North American cross-platform release, including in all packaged media, for 2015.

Over Your Dead Body, which bowed in Toronto ahead of a festival circuit run, portrays a theater troupe rehearsing a classic play of murder and vengeance only to see life begin to imitate art backstage.

The North American distribution deal was unveiled by **Charlotte Mickie**, president of Mongrel International, and Shout! Factory's **Richard Foos**, **Bob Emmer** and **Garson Foos**. THR

Universal Takes Spanish Rights to *Perfect Day*

By Pamela Rolfe

Universal Pictures Spain has acquired Spanish rights to **Fernando Leon de Aranoa**'s much-anticipated English-language debut *A Perfect Day*, scheduled for release in 2015.

Del Toro

Benicio Del Toro, **Tim Robbins** and **Melanie Thierry** star in the follow-up to Leon's acclaimed *Mondays in the Sun*, which featured **Javier Bardem** as an unemployed Spaniard.

A Perfect Day focuses on a group of aid workers trying to remove a cadaver from a well in a war zone, where it was intentionally thrown to spoil the water.

Reposado and Mediapro co-produce the film, which is backed by Spanish pubcaster TVE, Canal Plus Spain, Telecable and Orange. West End is handling international sales and will be showing a new promo of the film at AFM this week. THR

KINO PICKS UP *GRAMS*

By Scott Roxborough

Kino Lorber has grabbed North American rights to *1001 Grams*, the Norwegian drama from acclaimed helmer **Bent Hamer**. The movie is Norway's official entry for the 2015 foreign language Oscar.

The indie distributor is planning a limited theatrical bow for the film early in 2015 followed by a VOD release later in the year.

1001 Grams, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festiaval, stars **Ane Dahl Torp** as a divorced, work-obsessed scientist devoted to a life of precision and solitude, who is forced to question her priorities when she takes her ailing father's place at a seminar in Paris.

Kino Lorber specializes in such niche foreign-language fare. The New York-based distributor's recent acquisitions include **Jean-Luc Godard**'s 3D art film *Goodbye to Language* and **Vanessa Lapa**'s German documentary *The Decent One*, about the inner life of SS-leader **Heinrich Himmler**. THR

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AFM *In Brief*

DOUBLE DUTCH DOWN WITH AWESOMETOWN

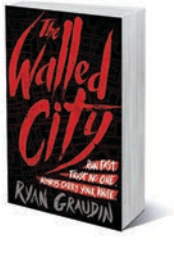
Canada's Double Dutch has inked a deal with Awesometown Entertainment to co-produce two to three animated features annually, each budgeted in the $10 million-$15 million range. The first title under the agreement will be the Christmas underdog story *Elliot: The Littlest Reindeer*, for which Double Dutch is handling worldwide rights and introducing to buyers at AFM. **Paul Griffin**, lead animator on *Happy Feet Two*, will direct. Double Dutch also signed a three-picture agreement with Trilight Entertainment.

TOM GREEN ENLISTS FOR *IRON SKY 2*

Canadian comedian and talk show host **Tom Green** has joined the cast of *Iron Sky: The Coming Race*. In the sequel to the 2012 sci-fi spoof about Nazis on the moon, Green will play a cult leader who bears a striking resemblance to a former CEO of Apple. Producers this week sent out the first draft of the script to a select group of fans to get their feedback.

IVANHOE ENVELOPS *WALLED CITY* RIGHTS

Ivanhoe Pictures has picked up the rights to adapt **Ryan Graudin**'s YA action-adventure novel *The Walled City*. The book, published Nov. 4 and pitched as *Hunger Games* meets *The Maze Runner*, was by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. The story follows three teenagers who are fighting to survive and escape a lawless, walled city.



THE 2013 AFM POSTER AWARDS

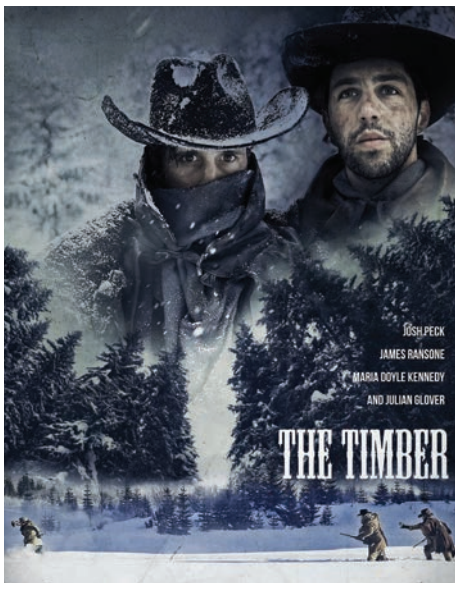
Westerns Edition

THR pays tribute to the most amusing and over-the-top promotional materials from the year's market

SMALLEST WINDOW OF TIME TO JUMP ON A BANDWAGON

***Cowboys vs. Zombies* (U.K./Australia)**

Obviously, this movie was shot after *Cowboys & Aliens* was announced — but before it bombed in theaters.



BEST BLENDING OF *THE GREY* AND *WALK THE LINE*

***The Timber* (USA)**

This movie is about either A) Two giants who live in the woods or B) Two regular-sized guys who live in a world of tiny trees and cowboys. Either way,it's clearly the lumberjack epic the world has been waiting for.

BEST WEREWOLF MOVIE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE ABOUT HYPERBILIRUBINEMIA

***Blood Moon* (U.K.)**

Something is killing folks as they make their way across the prairie, and by the looks of those yellow eyes, we're assuming it's a werewolf. That, or an incredibly hairy dude with jaundice.

BEST REASON NOT TO CLEAN YOUR SIX-SHOOTER AFTER TOO MUCH SARSAPARILLA

***Cowboys* (France)**

This one, based on a hit Croatian play (!), has it all: a drunken sheriff, chairs that splinter when you hit someone over theback with 'em and … Oliver Hardy?

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Rodolphe Buet

The exec on how *Hunger Games* as been a 'game-changer' for his company, the new *Heidi* kids movie (Japan can't wait!) and the dangers of the film industry not learning from the music business By Scott Roxborough

"*Hunger Games* was an important step that brought us into the leading companies category," says Buet, who was photographed Oct. 21 by Markus Altman in his office in Berlin.

BEFORE RODOLPHE BUET was promoted to CEO of StudioCanal Germany in 2012, the company was a minor player on the national scene. (Four years earlier, StudioCanal's parent company had acquired Kinowelt, the German art house shingle with a huge library of DVD classics.) But Buet arrived with a plan to bring StudioCanal Germany into the major leagues. A deal with Lionsgate secured *The Hunger Games* for Germany — the only StudioCanal operation with the blockbuster YA franchise — and after two years of development, Buet is set to deliver StudioCanal's first major German-language production, a revival of Alpine family film classic *Heidi*. Ahead of AFM, Buet, 51, sat down with *THR* to talk about how *Hunger Games* has transformed his company, new competition from Netflix and why too many sequels are killing the business.

How did you get the rights for Germany for *The Hunger Games*?
We talked about the franchise at a very early stage with Lionsgate. They mentioned they were buying these rights, and Helen Lee Kim (then president of Lionsgate international sales) sent us the first book. I was flying to L.A. or something, I had the book in my bag and read it. It isn't the kind of book I'm used to reading, but this one was a page-turner. Lionsgate understood how passionate we were about the project, and we closed the deal for the first *Hunger Games* at AFM in 2010 and *Catching Fire* in Cannes 2012. Then, based on the success of the first film, we signed the first Lionsgate output deal covering its 2012, '13 and '14 productions, including the final *Hunger Games* films.

Are your StudioCanal colleagues in France, Australia and the U.K. jealous? You're the only one with *Hunger Games*.
Of course they are. But ultimately, the success in one territory helps the whole StudioCanal group. That kind of movie is a game-changer. If you generate 4 million admissions (in the German market), you are immediately among the top five films of the year. The success showed the market, the cinemas and our TV and home video partners that StudioCanal was moving from being a little company to a big company and that our marketing and distribution teams could deliver a movie at that level.

***Heidi*, your first German-language production, also will be the first German kids film to go out via StudioCanal's operations in France and the U.K.**
Yes, and France is looking at the film as a priority. We've already had interest as well from some Japanese partners, as *Heidi* is an iconic brand in Japan. It will be one of the first German family entertainment films to presell in several territories before it opens in Germany.

How dependent is StudioCanal on the DVD market?
We used to be hugely dependent. We used to have about 50 percent of our revenue out of DVD and probably 70 percent of our growth margins. Our strong new releases are much more balanced between TV, DVD, VOD and theatrical. Home video revenue last year was about 35 percent of StudioCanal's revenue. Now, the most contributive business is television.

Netflix launched in Germany this year. What impact is it having?
I was expecting something more surprising. The buzz was huge before the launch. It seems to be a soft launch. The technical platform is excellent, but as a consumer, I will say the range of films available are not at the level I'd like it to be.

Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos has said films aren't so important to Netflix, that the real money for them is in TV series.
He is probably right on the short-term basis; the number of clicks per film is probably not as high as on the TV series. But if you look at the Netflix platform in the U.S., the offer is fantastic, it's huge, you can access almost everything. Are people subscribing to a digital platform because of the content they will screen or because of the content they can potentially access? I think it is a combination of both. Would people subscribe just for *Orange Is the New Black* or *Breaking Bad*?

Can VOD replace the decline in DVD revenue?
The home video market in general is going down, and VOD platforms are not compensating for this decline. We faced this kind of up and down before. Do I think the library will remain a strong asset? I'm sure of it. We have a more and more fragmented audience, not only on the Internet and the VOD platforms but also on traditional broadcasters. One of the way for them to generate ad revenue, to generate an audience, will be to address multiple niche audiences, and films can do that.

What's your AFM strategy this year?
Two or three years ago, we weren't acquiring movies. Our operation was not strong enough, and the management was reluctant to greenlight acquisitions. Things have changed, and we have tripled our investments. But we don't have to buy movies. We have the StudioCanal productions, the Lionsgate output deal. If I buy a movie in L.A., great. If I don't ... we are not out of gas. In addition to our needs for Germany, we are looking for StudioCanal group synergies. For example, in Toronto we bought [civil rights drama] *Selma* for Australia and Germany. We bought it because combining Germany with Australia gave us an competitive advantage.

What does the German market want right now?
What every market wants: fresh, creative content. When I look at Hollywood, all I see are remakes, sequels, reboots: *Transformers 4*, *Avengers 3*, *Spider-Man 22*. It reminds me of my time in the music industry when we were just putting out best-of collections. It's a real danger. Kids, adults and seniors are expecting something more innovative. The vision we have for StudioCanal is to bring these new stories to Germany. THR

Directed by **Yuya Ishii**　(*Sawako Decides* (10), *The Great Passage* (13))

****Vancouver IFF - Roger's People Choice Award!!, Hawaii IFF, Taiwan Golden Horse IFF, Australia JFF, San Diego Asian FF****

Cast: Satoshi Tsumabuki, Kazuya Kamenashi, Ryo Katsuji, Yusuke Kamiji, Sosuke Ikematsu, Mitsuki Takahata

134 minutes | Completed | Japan's release date - December 20, 2014

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LADY MAIKO

Directed by **Masayuki Suo**
("*Shall We Dance?*"(96))
****Shanghai IFF,*
Taiwan Taoyuan FF,
*Australia Japan FF****
Cast: Mone Kamishiraishi,
Hiroki Hasegawa,
Sumiko Fuji
Naoto Takenaka
135 minutes | Completed

Climbing to Spring

Directed by **Daisaku Kimura**
("*Mt. Tsurugidake*" (09))
****Taiwan Taoyuan FF*
*Australia Japan FF****
Cast: Kenichi Matsuyama
Yu Aoi
Etsushi Toyokawa
116 minutes | Completed

a stitch of life

Directed by **Yukiko Mishima**
****NEW****
Cast: Miki Nakatani
Takahiro Miura,
Hairi Katagiri,
Haru Kuroki
Hana Sugisaki
about 110 minutes
Post Production,
Open in Japan on Jan 31, 2015

God Tongue
Kiss Pressure Game
The Movie 2
-Psychic Love

Directed by **Nobuyuki Sakuma**

Cast: Shogo Kawashima
Hideaki Ito
117 minutes | Completed

Cat Island "Aoshima"

The Cats of Aoshima, Setouchi
15 humans, 100 cats. On Aoshima, an island in the Seto Inland Sea, there are no cars, no inns, no restaurants.
Relaxing and cozy in rain or shine. From Ehime, a heartwarming tale of cats.

5-minute program, 10 episodes
Run time: 60 minutes. Bonus footage: lessons on how to photograph cats by cat photographer Sakura Ishihara.

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----------ANIMATION SERIES----------

Denki-gai

****Animation Series****
30 mins x 12 episodes

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YUKI YUNA is a Hero

****Animation Series****
30 mins x 12 episodes

Yuna Yuki is an ordinary second-year middle school student. But there is one extraordinary thing about Yuki -- she belongs to the "Brave Hero Club." What does the Brave Hero Club do? Who is the mysterious being called "Vertex?"

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AFM 2014 SCREENING GUIDE

TODAY

8:45 AM Fairmont 5, ***Casanova***, Variations Alfama Films, 118 mins.; Broadway 2, ***Gruss Gott, Senor Ramon***, Mongrel Media Inc., 120 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Sorry If I Call You Love***, Film Factory Entertainment, 120 mins.

9:00 AM Broadway 1, ***After the Ball***, Myriad Pictures; Fairmont 2, ***Against the Sun***, Goldcrest Films International, 99 mins.; AMC 3, ***Asterix : The Mansions of the Gods***, SND M6 Groupe, 85 mins.; AMC 2, ***Captain Sabertooth and the Treasure of Lama Rama***, Sola Media Gmbh, 90 mins.; AMC 1, ***Darker Than Night***, 6 Sales, 100 mins.; AMC 4, ***Easy Sex, Sad Movies***, Filmax International, 90 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Goodnight Mommy***, Films Distribution, 99 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Hyena***, Independent, 112 mins.; Loews 3, ***It's Only Make Believe***, Princ Films, 91 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***Kelly & Cal***, Electric Entertainment, 107 mins.; Ocean Scr #, ***Learning to Drive,*** Westend Films, 105 mins.; AMC 6, ***Northmen — A Viking Saga***, Salt, 97 mins.; Loews 2, ***Painkillers***, Darclight Films, 102 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Split Second***, Goliath Film & Media Holdings Inc., 82 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Strange Blood***, Bleiberg Entertainment Llc., 85 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***The Farewell Party***, Beta Cinema, 93 mins.; AMC 5, ***The Gate***, Gaumont; AMC 7, ***Tiger House***, Altitude Film Sales. 85 mins.; Loews 1, ***What Lola Wants***, Arclight Films, 81 mins.

11:00 Fairmont 2, ***Allies***, Parkland Pictures, 98 mins.; Loews 2, ***Cowboys***, Wide, 104 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Death in Buenos Aires***, Film Factory Entertainment, 86 mins.; Broadway 3, ***El Americano 3D: The Movie***, Filmsharks Int'l; Ocean Scr #, ***Esio Trot***, Red Arrow International, 90 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***L.A. Slasher***, Archstone Distribution, 86 mins.; AMC 7, ***Late Spring***, M-Line Distribution, 100 mins.; Loews 3, ***Luna***, Media Luna New Films Ug, 104 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Millionaire Dog***, Deaplaneta 90 mins.; Fairmont 1, Mourning Grave, 9Ers Entertainment, 90 mins.; Broadway 1, ***Skin Trade***, Hyde Park International; Broadway 2, ***Song of the Sea***, Westend Films, 90 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***SPL 2 — A Time for Consequences***, Star Alliance Movies (HK) Co. Ltd; Broadway 4, ***The Diabolical***, Content Media Corp., 90 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***The Forger,*** The Solution Entertainment Group, 92 mins.; AMC 3, ***The Hero of Color City,*** Moviehouse Entertainment, 20 mins.; Loews 1, ***The Pirate***, Vision Films, 101 mins.; AMC 1 Theeb, Fortissimo Films, 100 mins.; AMC 6, ***Yugo & Lala 2***, Golden Network Asia Ltd., 76 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Zombie Fight Club***, Star Alliance Movies (HK) Co. Ltd.

Captain Sabertooth and the Treasure of Lama Rama

1:00 PM AMC 2, ***Battle for Skyark***, Empress Road Pictures, 88 mins.; AMC 7, ***Borning***, Svensk Filmindustri, Ab, 93 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Casual Encounters,*** Carnaby International, 86 mins.; Ocean Scr #, ***Dark Was the Night***, Premiere Entertainment Group; Loews 1, ***Encounter***, Sahara Vision Productions, 82 mins.; Loews 2, ***Eva Braun***, Wide, 82 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Extraordinary Tales***, Bac Films, 70 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Fear of Water,*** California Pictures Inc., 103 mins.; AMC 1 Gentle Oration Films, 100 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***In Paradise***, Sandbox Productions Inc., 103 mins.; Loews 3, ***Legend of the Pandas***, China Film Promotion Int'l, 78 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Life Partners***, Myriad Pictures, 93 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Not My Day***, Picture Tree International Gmbh, 115 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Poseso***, Filmsharks Int'l, 81 mins.; AMC 6, ***Red Knot***, Umedia International; AMC 5, ***Sex, Love & Therapy***, SND M6 Groupe, 90 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Shrew's Nest***, Film Factory Entertainment, 91 mins.; Broadway 1, ***The Barber,*** The Little Film Co., 95 mins.; AMC 4, ***The Last Word***, Altitude Film Sales; Fairmont 1, ***The Night Crew***, Premiere Entertainment Group; Tunnel Post #1, ***Tokyo Fiancee,*** Films Distribution, 100 mins.;

3:00 PM Fairmont 4, ***A Dark Reflection***, Artist View Entertainment Inc., 95 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Agnieszka***, Arri Worldsales, 98 mins.; Ocean Scr #, ***Boulevard***, Inception Film Partners Llc., 88 mins.; Loews 1, ***Brancusi From Eternity***, Artis Film Romania 100 mins.; AMC 5, ***Comet***, Content Media Corp., 91 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Gangster Pay Day***, Star Alliance Movies (HK) Co. Ltd.; AMC 7, ***Kung Fu Jungle***, Emperor Motion Pictures, 100 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Let's Kill Ward's Wife***, Epic Pictures Group; Broadway 1, ***Marshland***, Film Factory Entertainment, 104 mins.; AMC 2, ***Moomins on the Riviera***, Indie Sales, 80 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Mountain Men***, Myriad Pictures; Loews 3, ***No Thank You***, Media Luna New Films Ug, 95 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Now Add Honey***, Lightning Entertainment; AMC 4, ***Sword of Vengeance***, Protagonist Pictures; Fairmont 1, ***The 7Th Dwarf***, Global Screen Gmbh, 80 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***The Canal Jinga Films***, 90 mins.; Broadway 2, ***The Ignorance of Blood***, Latido, 109 mins.; AMC 6, ***The Pilgrim — Paulo Coelho's Best Story***, Picture Tree International Gmbh, 112 mins.; AMC 1, ***Tigers***, The Match Factory, 90 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Vengeance of an Assassin***, Sahamongkolfilm International Co. Ltd., 93 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Wicked Flying Monkeys 3D***, Filmsharks Int'l, 90 mins.; Loews 2, ***Zombie: The Resurrection of Tim Zom***, Wide, 72 mins.

5:00 PM Loews 3, ***All Gods Children***, Artis Film Romania, 100 mins.; AMC 5, ***Any Day***, VMI Worldwide, 100 mins.; AMC 4, ***Charlie's Farm***, Shoreline Entertainment, 93 mins.; Loews 1, ***Chasing Taste***, Aspire Talent Management, 89 mins.; AMC 3, ***Dear White People***, The Exchange, 108 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Dinosaur Island***, Arclight Films; Fairmont 1, ***Drones***, Voltage Pictures, 103 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Get Santa***, Altitude Film Sales, 93 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Haemoo***, Finecut Co. Ltd., 100 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Madame Bovary***, Radiant Films International, 118 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Midnight Sun***, Hyde Park International, 97 mins.; AMC 6, ***Parasyte Part 1***, Toho Co. Ltd., 108 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Shelby: The Dog Who Saved Christmas***, Highland Film Group; AMC 1, ***The Tenor Lirico Spinto***, More in Group, 121 mins.; Loews 2, ***Turkey Shoot***, Lightning Entertainment, 90 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Welcome to Me***, Cargo Entertainment, 84 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***What We Did on Our Holiday***, Independent, 96 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***Zero Tolerance***, Phoenix Worldwide Entertainment, 90 mins.

7:00 PM Fairmont 2, ***Afterdeath***, VMI Worldwide; Fairmont 5, ***Bikini Model***, Academy New Films International, 85 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Dummie the Mummy and the Golden Scarab***, Dutch Features Global Entertainment, 80 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Gone Astray***,

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英皇電影
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Goliath Film & Media Holdings, Inc., 85 mins.; Loews 1, ***Leading Lady,*** Summer Hill Films, 96 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Love Addict***, Tricoast Worldwide, 95 mins.; Loews 3, ***Nick***, Montecristo International, 92 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Resilient Love***, American Cinema International, 89 mins.; Ocean Scr #, ***Roaring Currents***, CJ E&M Corp./CJ Entertainment, 25 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***The Games Maker 3D***, Filmsharks Int'l, 111 mins.; Loews 2, ***The Timber***, Red Sea Media Inc., 95 mins.

SATURDAY, NOV. 8

8:30 AM Loews 1, ***Beloved Sisters***, Global Screen Gmbh, 138 mins.; Broadway 2, ***La French***, Gaumont, 135 mins.

8:45 AM Broadway 1, ***Nobody From Nowhere***, Pathe International (Fr), 118 mins.; AMC 6, ***Testament of Youth***, Protagonist Pictures, 126 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***We Are Young, We Are Strong***, Beta Cinema, 127 mins.

9:00 AM AMC 4, ***Before I Disappear***, Electric Entertainment, 93 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Electric Boogaloo: The Wild, Untold Story of Cannon Films***, Mongrel Media Inc., 105 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Gone Astray***, Goliath Film & Media Holdings Inc., 85 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***Housebound***, Films Distribution, 109 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***I-Lived***, Bleiberg Entertainment Llc., 96 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Itsi Bitsi***, The Match Factory, 107 Mins.; AMC 2, ***La Famille Belier***, SND M6 Groupe, 104 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Paper Planes 3D***, Arclight Films; Doubletree #2, ***Pause***, Picture Tree International Gmbh, 82 mins.; Loews 3, ***Preggoland***, Lightning Entertainment, 109 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Ride***, 6 Sales 93 mins.; Loews 2, ***The Dream Children***, Media Luna New Films Ug, 98 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***The Great Hypnotist***, Fortissimo Films, 100 mins.

11:00 AM AMC 7, ***But Always***, Emperor Motion Pictures, 105 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Casual Encounters***, Carnaby International, 86 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Club Life***, Bleiberg Entertainment Llc., 92 mins.; Loews 1, ***Conspiracy of Silence***, Angel Grace Productions, 90 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Electroboy***, Picture Tree International Gmbh, 113 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Jenny's Wedding***, The Solution Entertainment Group; AMC 3, ***Love Island***, The Match Factory, 90 mins.; AMC 2, ***Nova***, Creative Content Association Malaysia, 106 mins.; Broadway 2, ***On Any Sunday***, Red Bull Media House, 95 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Ooops! Noah Is Gone ...***, Global Screen Gmbh, 80 mins.; AMC 6, ***Robot Overlords***, Embankment Films Ltd., 90 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***The Black Rider***, Pure Flix Entertainment, 98 mins.; Broadway 1, ***The Duke of Burgundy***, Protagonist Pictures; Loews 2, ***The Identical***, Vision Films, 107 mins.; Loews 3, ***The Man in the Orange Jacket***, Wide, 71 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, Torrente 5, ***Mission Eurovegas***, Filmsharks Int'l, 102 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***T-Pang Rescue***, M-Line Distribution; Broadway 4, ***Vampire Sisters 2 — Bats in the Belly***, Arri Worldsales, 94 mins.; AMC 4, ***Walter***, Beta Cinema, 88 mins.

1:00 PM Loews 1, ***AB Negative***, Jinga Films, 85 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***7 Minutes***, Premiere Entertainment Group, 92 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Burying the Ex,*** Voltage Pictures, 93 mins.; AMC 1, ***Charles and I***, Applied Art Productions, 115 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Digging Up the Marrow***, Kaleidoscope Film Distribution Ltd., 88 mins.; AMC 4, ***Easy Sex, Sad Movies***, Filmax International, 90 mins.; Broadway 1, ***Foodies***, Fortissimo Films, 94 mins.; AMC 3, ***Frog Kingdom***, Golden Network Asia Ltd., 86 mins.; AMC 7, ***From The Dark***, MPI Media Group, 90 mins.; Loews 3, ***Kill Game***, VMI Worldwide, 102 mins.; Fairmont 4, ***L.A. Slasher***, Archstone Distribution, 86 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Messi***, Film Factory Entertainment, 90 mins.; AMC 2, ***Ruth & Alex***, Myriad Pictures, 95 mins.; Broadway 2, ***Skin Trade***, Hyde Park International; Fairmont 2, ***Stomping Ground***, California Pictures Inc.; Loews 2, ***Tell***, Arclight Films; Fairmont 3, ***The Candlelight Murders***, Goliath Film & Media Holdings Inc., 86 mins.; Broadway 3, ***The Diabolical***, Content Media Corp., 90 mins.; Broadway 4, ***The Tragedy***, Silver Spear Pictures, 103 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Wrecked***, Beta Cinema, 93 mins.

3:00 Fairmont 4, ***A Dark Reflection***, Artist View Entertainment Inc., 95 mins.; AMC 5, ***Bat Outta Hell***, Tricoast Worldwide, 95 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Behavior***, Latido, 108 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Beyond the Lights***, Relativity International; Broadway 1, ***Born Wild***, Lighthouse Pictures Llc., 104 mins.; AMC 2, ***Don't Go Breaking My Heart 2***, Media Asia Film; Loews 1, ***Encounter***, Sahara Vision Productions, 82 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Hungry Hearts***, Radiant Films International, 109 mins.; Loews 3, Indigenous, ***Lightning Entertainment***, 86 mins.; Loews 2, ***Kingston Paradise***, California Pictures Inc., 84 mins.; Broadway 2, ***My Old Lady***, Protagonist Pictures; Ocean Scr #, ***Northern Soul***, The Little Film Company, 100 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Rio I Love You***, Westend Films, 109 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Saint Laurent***, EuropaCorp, 150 mins.; AMC 7, ***Space Dogs: Adventure to the Moon***, Epic Pictures Group, 90 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***Teen Lust***, Darclight Films; Tunnel Post #1, ***The Little Medic: The Secret Mission of the Bodynauts***, Beta Cinema, 75 mins.; Broadway 3, ***Wicked Flying Monkeys 3D,*** Filmsharks Int'l, 90 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Wine of Summer***, New Films International, 91 mins.; AMC 1, ***Wyrmwood***, Altitude Film Sales, 92 mins.

5:00 PM AMC 1, ***Accused***, Fortissimo Films, 97 mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Dancer and the Dame***, Pure Flix Entertainment, 90 mins.; Loews 2, ***Dinosaur Island***, Arclight Films; Fairmont 3, ***Every Secret Thing***, Hyde Park International, 93 mins.; AMC 2, ***Gates of the Sun***, Wtfilms, 90 mins.; Broadway 1, ***Gloria! The Price of Fame***, 6 Sales, 100 mins.; AMC 5, ***Madame Bovary***, Radiant Films International, 118 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Manglehorn***, Westend Films, 97 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Mexico Barbaro***, Raven Banner Entertainment 101 mins.; Loews 1, ***Monster Truck***, VMI Worldwide, 94 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Once in a Lifetime***, TF1 International, 100 mins.; Broadway 4, ***Saint Laurent***, EuropaCorp, 150 mins.; Loews 3, ***The Green Prince***, Global Screen Gmbh 101 mins.; AMC 7, ***The Last 5 Years***, The Exchange, 94 mins.; AMC 4, ***The Road Within***, Annapurna International (Panorama Media); Ocean Scr #, ***There Are Monsters,*** The Works International, 90 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Tokyo Fiancee***, Films Distribution, 100 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Tour De Force***, Beta Cinema, 95 mins.

7:00 PM Fairmont 4, ***Art Ache***, Shoreline Entertainment, 77 mins.; Doubletree #1, ***Black and White: The Dawn of Justice***, Ablaze Image, 126 mins.; Loews 1,***Encounter***, Sahara Vision Productions, 82 Mins.; Fairmont 2, ***Field of Lost Shoes***, VMI Worldwide, 96 mins.; Loews 2, ***Finding Gaston***, Wide, 78 mins.; Loews 3, ***Pernicious***, VMI Worldwide, 93 mins.; Tunnel Post #1, ***Reckless***, Dutch Features Global Entertainment, 95 mins.; Doubletree #2, ***Savva***, Glukoza Production, 115 mins.; Fairmont 1, ***Split Second***, Goliath Film & Media Holdings, Inc., 82 mins.; Fairmont 3, ***The Tenor Lirico Spinto***, More In Group, 121 mins.; Fairmont 5, ***Wish You Well***, American Cinema Internationa, 108 mins.

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Chastain (left) and Isaac do business.

A Most Violent Year

J.C. Chandor scores again with a compelling look at a young businessman who tries to stay clean in dirty old New York

BY TODD MCCARTHY

J.C. CHANDOR IS MAKING A HABIT OF TURNING OUT VERY GOOD films based on ideas that would hardly set a pitch meeting on fire: Investment bankers in their office, an old guy lost at sea on his yacht and, now, men competing for control of the glamorous milieu of heating oil suppliers in New York City. With *A Most Violent Year*, the writer-director delivers again with a story of dog-eat-dog capitalism in action set during a notably rough patch in New York City history. Led by a superb performance by Oscar Isaac as an independent businessman trying not to get dirty in a dirty world, this compelling tale will have to fight for any headway in the market but will impress discerning viewers with its skill at dramatizing things that make the world go round — but that are rarely dealt with except in outright gangster films.

As he demonstrated in his debut feature, *Margin Call*, Chandor has a knack for making arcane business practices the stuff of potent human drama. In a basic way, he connects this to the American dream and the urge to get ahead in life, but neither in any pompous symbolic way nor to take pot-shots at capitalism.

After a startling opening in which a young oil truck driver, Julian (Elyes Gabel), is brutally attacked and kicked out of his cab, the polite and immaculately accoutered Abel Morales (Isaac), accompanied by his dour lawyer (Albert Brooks) concludes a major deal with some Hasidic Jews for an oil holding facility by the water; Abel puts some money down and must pay the balance within the month or lose his substantial investment.

From appearances, Abel is a sincere, straightforward businessman who wants to run his Standard Heating Oil company in a proper way and is disgusted by the thuggery that has landed one of his drivers in the hospital. On the other hand, his brassy wife, Anna (Jessica Chastain), is the daughter of a Brooklyn mobster and is the one who first recognizes that "we're at war" with other members of the small but lucrative world of independent New York oil suppliers.

Coincidentally or not, there's a great deal about Abel's manner that's reminiscent of the most famous of fictional gangsters at that particular historical moment, Michael Corleone. An immigrant of unspecified background, Abel is short and compact, always impeccably dressed and coiffed, speaks slowly and softly and exercises his authority through the use of an arsenal of subtle behavioral tricks.

But intimidation and coercion are not his thing and he vehemently resists the Teamsters' suggestion of arming his drivers, arguing that this would just up the ante of violence. When he approaches city officials for help, however, the assistant D.A. (David Oyelowo) informs him he's being charged with multiple offenses, including fraud and cooking the books.

Just as he tightened the vice on the characters in his previous films, Chandor shrewdly applies the slow squeeze to Abel as the deadline approaches for paying the remaining 60 percent for the property that will give him direct access to oil tankers; if he can't come up with the cash, he's finished. But in a world where participants expect to play by the rules of the jungle, Abel wants to play it straight. Is it out of habit, tradition or merely sheer malice that businessmen try not just to dominate but to ruin their rivals? Is it worth risking prison or a vendetta to knock colleagues out of the race? And who, nine times out of ten, ends up getting the short end of the stick, the big shot or the little guy?

Chandor's absorbing and troubling film asks these difficult questions against a backdrop of tacitly accepted corruption and street-level New York interaction rarely seen since the heyday of Sidney Lumet. The sense of widely shared assumptions about what's okay and what's not in business dealings is bracingly brought home, and the tension of the final stretch provokes a prolonged case of sweaty palms.

Whereas *Margin Call* dazzled with the help of several thespian luminaries, *A Most Violent Year* gets great mileage out of detailed character work from a very large cast. Good as he was in *Inside Llewyn Davis* last year, Oscar Isaac really breaks through with this performance. And cast against type as a thickly-accented Brooklyn gal unburdened by her husband's principles, Chastain sharply conveys Anna's matter-of-fact savvy as well as her love for her man and daughters.

The hulking vintage cars numerously on display (especially in a spectacular traffic jam scene) lend a sense of the visual grossness of the time. The only technical deficiency turns up in the nighttime and low-light scenes, which, as shot by the talented rising cinematographer Bradford Young (*Pariah*, *Middle of Nowhere*, *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*), have a muddy thinness to them, a washed-out look that saps the images of any weight.

Opening Night Film — AFI Fest
Cast *Oscar Isaac, Jessica Chastain, David Oyelowo, Alessandro Nivola, Elyes Gabel, Albert Brooks,*
Director *J.C. Chandor// 124 minutes*

Black Coal, Thin Ice

Chinese director Diao Yinan sets a stylish and gripping, if convoluted, film noir among ordinary people in the provinces

BY DEBORAH YOUNG

Police investigate a murder in this Chinese homage to film noir.

BLACK COAL THIN ICE IS A salute to the classic Hollywood film noir, an exciting stylistic tour de force in which writer-director Diao Yinan combines the wry humor of his debut film *Uniform* with the bleakness and pessimism of his 2007 *Night Train*. But in spite of all these nice things, as a detective story it verges on the incomprehensible, which could be a serious drawback to distribution. Sophisticated audiences will enjoy its strange atmosphere as they try to puzzle out plot and characters.

In 1999, a strange-shaped package in a dumpster turns out to be a human body part. Another piece surfaces in a coal factory. Someone has been chopped to bits, and his remains are turning up all over the province, in places too remote for a single murderer to have scattered them in one day.

Enter detective Zhang (Liao Fan), a comical figure behind a drooping mustache. Called in to investigate, he and his team identify the murder victim as a simple man whose job was to weigh trucks laden with coal. They corner two suspects in a punk hair salon but botch the arrest so badly that two policemen are killed.

We catch up to Zhang in 2004, lying dead drunk on an icy road. He's working as a security guard now, but a chance encounter with former colleague Capt. Wang (the warm Yu Ailei) draws him back into a case remarkably similar to the last. The police are staking out Wu Zhizhen (played by young Taiwanese star Gwei Lun Mei), widow of the murdered coal weigher in the case five years ago. She is linked to two fresh murders.

Though he's no longer working for the police, Zhang starts hanging around the dry cleaners where Zhizhen quietly works in a boring job. Sleuthing turns to awkward courtship, and he invites her to go skating in an eerie night scene pulsating with danger. But by now he's hooked on the mousy femme fatale, and even another grisly murder can't break her spell. Their attraction climaxes in more ways than one while they're dangling inside an immobile cable car in a Hitchcockian scene spiked with eros and tension.

But Diao is up to much more than a simple homage to the masters, and his screenplay turns the traditional noir ambience upside down by setting the story among the humble and lowly members of contemporary Chinese society. If the plotting were only more coherent and audience-friendly and the storytelling more disciplined, the film's extraordinarily complex atmosphere would be irresistible.

Shooting on snow-covered streets and underpasses, in huge factories and neon-lit gambling dens, cinematographer Dong Jinsong's images are strikingly original, casting the whole story in a unique filmic space hovering between dreams and reality.

Cast *Liao Fan, Gwei Lun Mei, Wang Xuebing, Wang Jingchun, Yu Ailei, Ni Jingyang*
Director *Diao Yinan*
106 minutes

Red Army

Gabriel Polsky's genial, jokey documentary profiles Soviet Russia's ice hockey team during their peak years as invincible Cold Warriors against the capitalist West

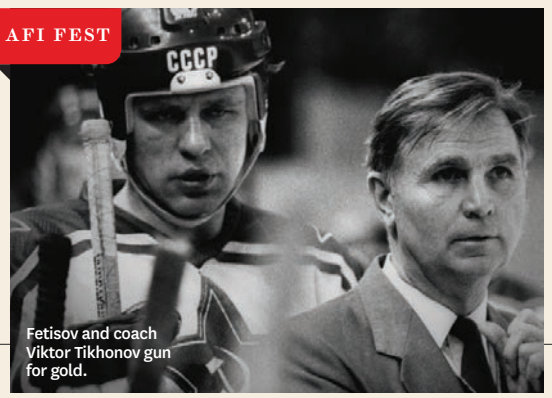
BY STEPHEN DALTON

GABRIEL POLSKY'S SOLO DIRECTING debut is a playful documentary about the former Soviet Union's national ice hockey squad, an all-conquering machine schooled under military training-camp conditions as an ideological propaganda weapon.

Red Army is a slick, witty, fast-moving blend of sports story and history lesson with appeal beyond the hockey-fan demographic. The tone is lighthearted, but with splashes of personal tragedy and political intrigue to add grit.

Interweaving scratchy archive footage from the 1970s and '80s with handsomely shot contemporary interviews, Polsky talks to superstar players, retired KGB officers, sports journalists and veteran bureaucrats. His star interview is Viacheslav "Slava" Fetisov, a former captain of the Soviet national team and double Olympic gold medal-winner, whose colorful life story gives the film its loose narrative spine. Fetisov's stellar career was full of triumph and tension, confrontations with his Communist bosses and fallouts with former sporting comrades.

As the old USSR unraveled into political and financial bankruptcy, Fetisov declined hugely lucrative offers to defect to the NHL in North America, partly because he was being blackmailed to pay the bulk of his salary back to Russia. He was finally allowed to leave for a U.S. career with the New Jersey Devils and Detroit Red Wings, only to face red-baiting hostility and homesickness. In a neat ideological twist, the elegant collective teamwork that succeeded so brilliantly under Communism began to fall apart under the more brutal, individualistic playing style of the capitalist West. Like politics, sport is war by other means.



Fetisov and coach Viktor Tikhonov gun for gold.

A man with prodigious pride and no shortage of ego, Fetisov also is an enjoyably combative interview, shrugging off Polsky's questions with deadpan humor and sly sarcasm. Non-Russian audiences may be surprised by more recent developments in his career, revealed at the close of the film. Without getting into spoilers, Vladimir Putin is one of his close friends.

Incorporating jokey vintage clips of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, plus stylish animated graphics that borrow from classic Soviet poster art, *Red Army* tells a juicy story with brio and bounce. The soundtrack of jaunty cod-Russian folk music is also fun, even if it plays on well-worn Eastern Bloc cliches. More personal and psychological background on the key players might have elevated this fascinating historical drama beyond its slightly cartoonish elements. Even so, Polsky serves up a hearty dish of comfort-food nostalgia for the simple certainties of the Cold War.

Cast *Viacheslav Fetisov, Vladislav Tretiak, Scotty Bowman, Vladimir Pozner*
Director *Gabriel Polsky*
75 minutes

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Theeb

The young son of a sheik gets lost in the desert in this confident, sensitive drama from U.K.-born director Naji Abu Nowar

BY BOYD VAN HOEIJ

A YOUNG BEDOUIN BOY HAS to grow up fast if he's to survive practically alone in the 1916 Arabian desert in *Theeb*, the confident debut feature of U.K.-born, Jordan-based filmmaker Naji Abu Nowar. Though the pint-sized protagonist is never far out of sight, the film's vision is anything but limited, as various encounters in the desert conjure a vivid picture of a world that has remained unchanged for centuries but is quickly coming undone.

This gorgeously mounted if modest production finds itself at the odd intersection of a boy's adventure and a socio-politico-historical drama, which should give marketing departments of brave niche distributors unexpected opportunities — and almost-certain headaches.

Theeb (Jacir Eid, a real find), which means "wolf" in Arabic, is the third and youngest son of a recently deceased sheik, and he's being raised by his adult brother, Hussein (Hussein Salameh, actually Eid's cousin), the second in line. The story kicks off when a desert guide (Marji Audeh), accompanied by an English soldier (Jack Fox), shows up at the clan's encampment. The rules of Bedouin hospitality force the family to send someone along with the two men to their destination, a Roman-era well that's fallen into disuse.

Hussein and Theeb end up accompanying the men, and much quicker than he would like, Theeb learns about the sobering and very real dangers of the desert, which he'll soon have to brave all by himself. Through his chance encounters with various figures, a picture emerges of a Bedouin world that continues as if nothing has changed but has unwittingly entered a modern era of no return.

Eid (bottom) comes of age in the desert.

The ace cinematography, courtesy of Wolfgang Thaler, isn't interested so much in the beautiful landscapes as such but rather in how they suggest emotional states and struggles of little Theeb. Jerry Lane's music imbues the story with grandeur where necessary but is not afraid to play it small and heartbreaking; a mournful strings solo when Theeb dedicates himself to a terrible task involving sand and stones is haunting precisely because it's so bare-bones.

Sales *Fortissimo Films*
Cast *Jacir Eid, Hassan Mutlag, Hussein Salameh, Marji Audeh, Jack Fox*
Director *Naji Abu Nowar*
100 minutes

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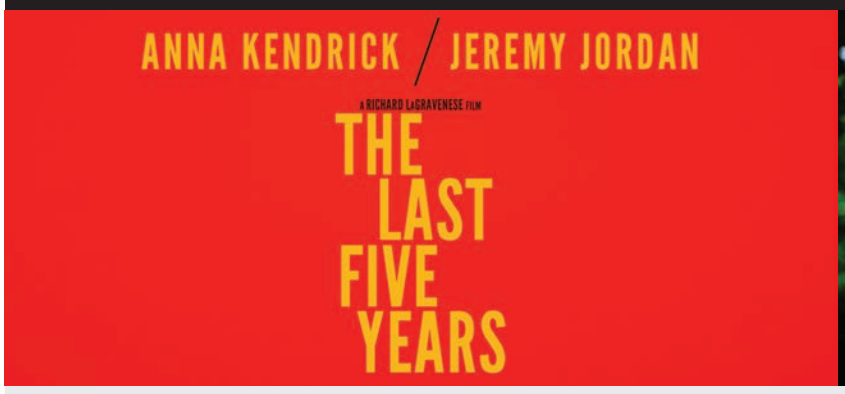

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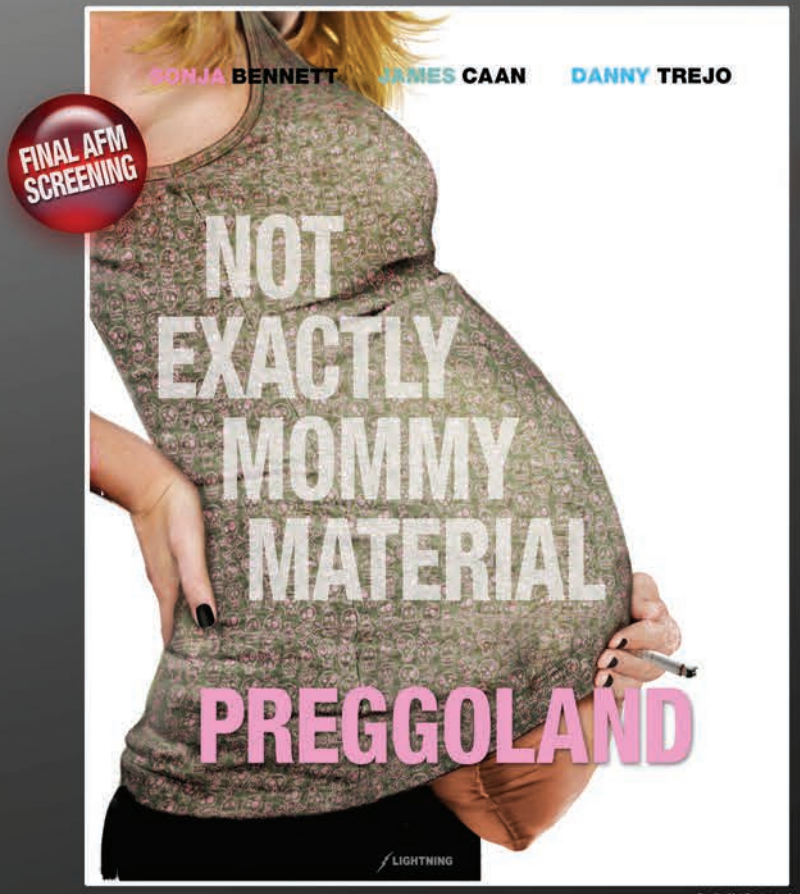

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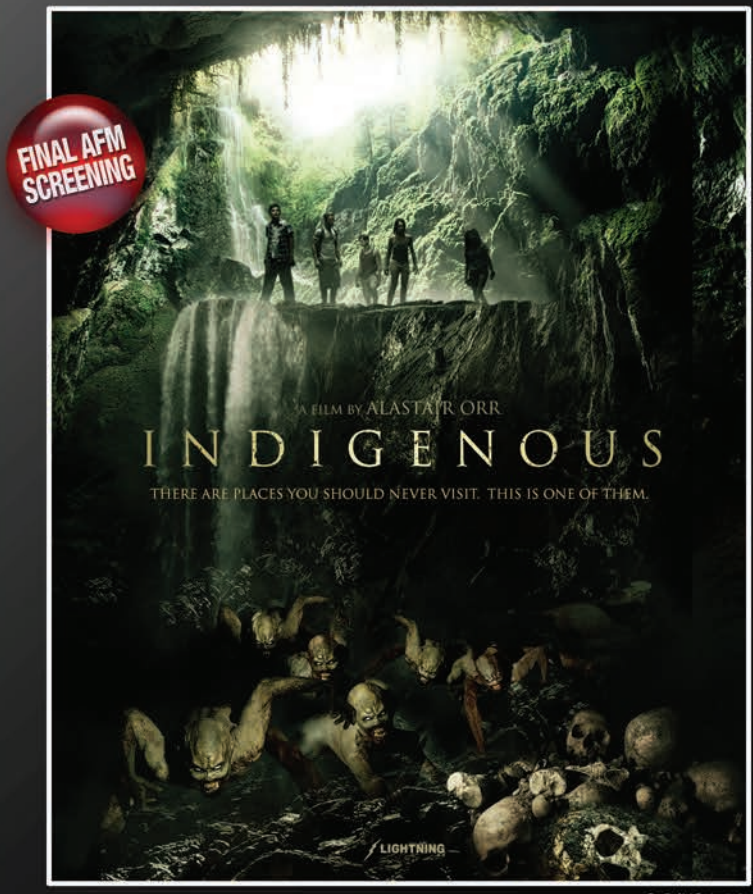
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Haemoo's characters are forced to brave the elements.

Haemoo

Shim Sung-bo's thriller about a boat crew's descent into chaos is often riveting despite concessions to blockbuster convention

BY CLARENCE TSUI

QUITE A FEW RECENT korean movies are obsessed with representing China as a threat to security and order at home. With *Haemoo*, screenwriter-turned-director Shim Sung-bo subverts the trend, adapting Kim Min-jung's play about the real-life incident of a Korean fishing boat crew casting bodies of 25 Chinese illegal immigrants overboard after a botched smuggling operation.

Subtlety and reflection are not Shim's strongest suit, with *Haemoo* subscribing to many of the conventions of both disaster epics and revenge dramas. And a seaborne romance subplot nudges the film toward *Titanic* territory.

It's a gripping ride, nevertheless. With powerful imagery, a simple and accessible story and a stellar performance from Kim Yoon-seok as a captain slowly spiraling toward madness, *Haemoo* has become a commercial and critical triumph since its release in South Korea in August. The participation of Bong Joon-ho (*The Host*, *Snowpiercer*) as co-screenwriter and producer should boost hopes of a niche release outside Asia.

Set in 1998, three years before the real-life incident actually took place, the film's journey into darkness begins when trawler captain Kang Chul-joo (Kim) finds his fortunes hit hard by the fallout of the Asian financial crisis.

Desperately trying to secure cash to save his creaking boat, Kang agrees to take on a mission trafficking Korean-Chinese immigrants to South Korea. It's a trip of no return for Kang and his crew as deadly mayhem sets in — at the very moment when a heavy fog results in zero visibility around the boat — and chaos reigns with all onboard going crazy, including bumbling boatswain Ho-young (Kim Sang-ho), swaggering handyman Kyung-goo (Yoo Seung-mok), chief engineer Wan-ho (Moon Sung-keun) and sex-crazed deputy Chang-wook (Lee Hee-joon).

The only faint light of humanity here is Dong-sik (Park Yoo-chun), whose love for one of the immigrants emboldens him, but this romantic subplot derails the film's potentially interesting trajectory into fantastical horror.

Nevertheless, *Haemoo* offers a spectacle: The camerawork from Hong Kyung-pyo and Lee Ha-joon's production design are effective in highlighting the differences between the vast, cold port and the unforgiving sea and cramped insides of the fishing boat.

Kim Sang-bum's and Kim Jae-bum's editing also gives the film oomph — their opening montage, showing the boat crew members going about their daily business with bright bonhomie, is a clever signpost warning of how this camaraderie will inevitably give way to the emergence of their darker psyches.

Sales *Finecut*
Cast *Kim Yoon-seok, Park Yu-chun, Han Ye-ri, Park Yoo-chun*
Director *Shim Sung-bo*
111 minutes

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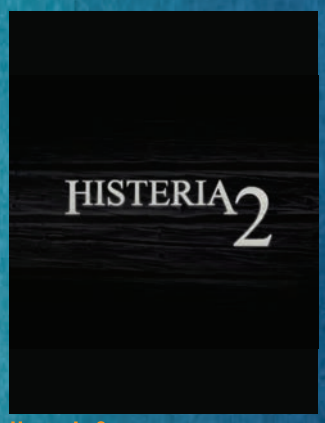

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Learning to Drive

Ben Kingsley rides shotgun with Patricia Clarkson in Isabel Coixet's familiar-feeling screen adaptation of a *New Yorker* essay BY SHERI LINDEN

Kingsley gives Clarkson lessons in driving and life.

CAUGHT IN THE EMOTIONAL undertow of divorce, a 50-something Manhattanite determines to get her driver's license, and she encounters all the symbolic self-empowering lessons that such a move suggests, in *Learning to Drive*. Katha Pollitt's autobiographical essay transitions to the screen as a low-key but overly schematic two-hander for Patricia Clarkson and Ben Kingsley, playing odd-couple student and teacher. Clarkson's lovely performance, far more layered than the adaptation by director Isabel Coixet and writer Sarah Kernochan, is the film's chief pleasure.

With its softball insights about midlife reinvention and its quasi-illuminating glances across the cultural and class divide, the movie takes its place on the spectrum of It's Never Too Late character studies. Yet however forced the drama, the sympathetic depiction of middle age could click with older audiences.

Kingsley is Darwan, the instructor who moonlights as a cabbie — or vice versa — and who, from the get-go, assumes the role of indispensable sage in the life of book critic Wendy (Clarkson). He refuses to take no for an answer when she tries to cancel her lessons, and once he's got her behind the wheel, he deploys every possible driving metaphor, starting with "read the signs." Their relationship unfolds along obvious parallels: While she dismantles her marital home, he starts one, in a basement apartment, with his arranged bride (Sarita Choudhury).

Kingsley imbues the role with rectitude and simmering anger, but Darwan never fully comes to life; even with his backstory, he's mainly a device for Wendy's awakening. Other characters are barely sketched, among them Wendy's philandering ex (Jake Weber) and her college-age daughter (Grace Gummer).

There are comic observations of life in the era of "you go, girl!" feminism (as Pollitt has called it). Least successful are a couple of sitcommy scenes with Samantha Bee as Wendy's suburban sister. But Clarkson is terrific at capturing the quiet terror — and tantric-sex-induced fatigue — of a blind date. Even with dialogue that says precisely what it means and doesn't always ring true, she strikes a subtle balance.

Coixet, who worked with her two leads on 2008's *Elegy*, injects a few fantasy and memory sequences to convey Wendy's grappling with her new aloneness. Mostly they fall flat, and the film as a whole is shot with little imagination. Editing ace Thelma Schoonmaker, in a rare non-Scorsese big-screen project, seems to be in salvaging mode rather than putting her stamp on the material. Director of photography Manel Ruiz's most visually expressive scene is a white-knuckle journey over the Queensboro Bridge, but otherwise New York is another undeveloped character.

Sales *WestEnd Films*
Cast *Patricia Clarkson, Ben Kingsley, Jake Weber, Sarita Choudhury, Grace Gummer, Samantha Bee*
Director *Isabel Coixet// 90 minutes*

Rachael Leigh Cook

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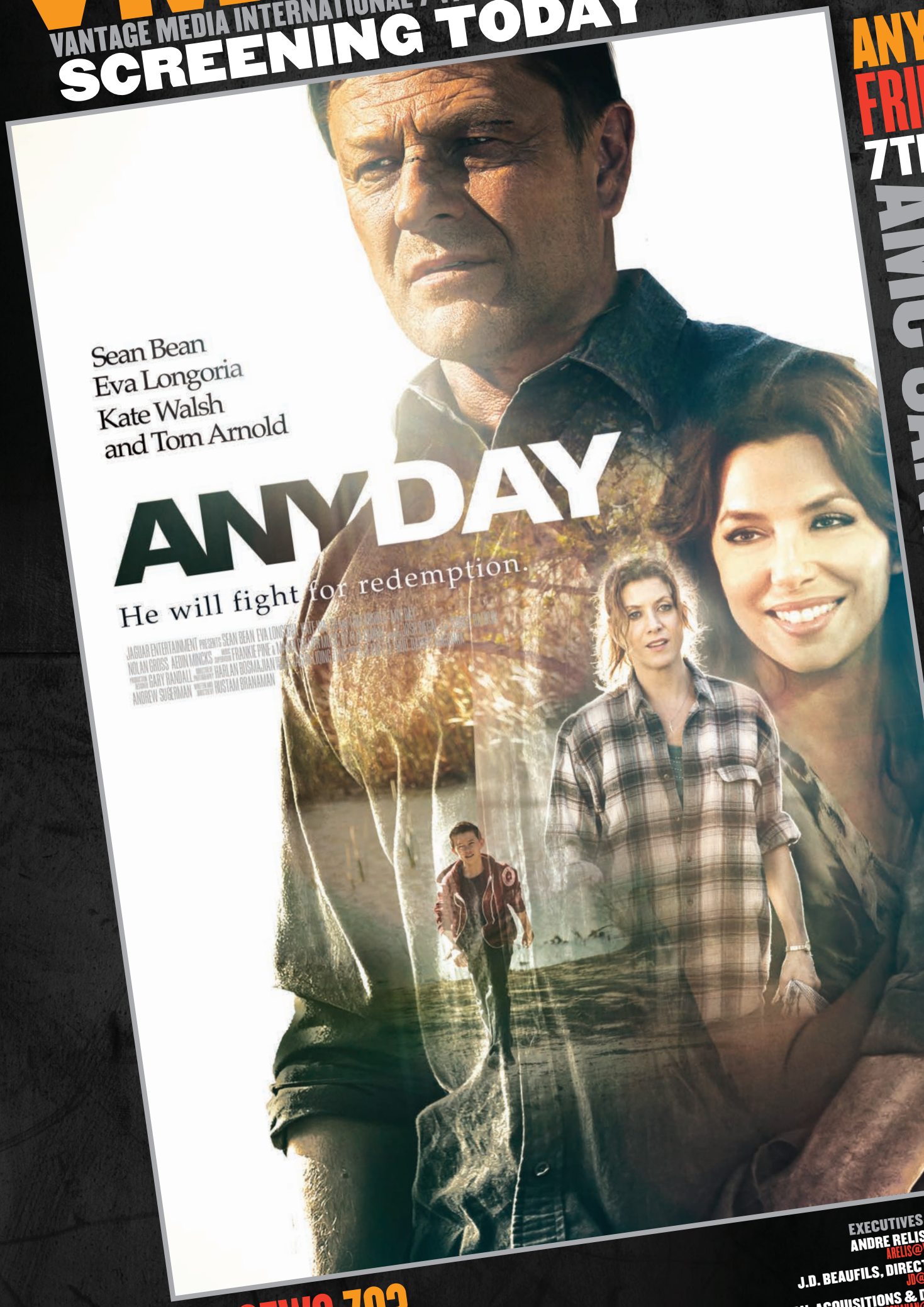

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Goodnight Mommy

Convinced their mother is an impostor, twin brothers take charge in this delectable serving of auteur horror from Austria

BY DAVID ROONEY

Mom doesn't like the twins anymore, and they're not happy.

NOT SINCE MICHAEL haneke unleashed a pair of psychotic young sadists on an unsuspecting family in his original 1997 *Funny Games* has a summer getaway in the peaceful Austrian countryside seemed less like a vacation. A wicked little chiller full of foreboding and malevolent twists, *Goodnight Mommy* is the first narrative feature from writer-directors Veronika Franz and Severin Fiala. It has cult potential stamped all over it.

There's a rich history of horror films exploiting the potential for intuitive communication, conspiracy, loyalty, betrayal and creepiness in twins. The 10-year-old identical brothers at the center of *Goodnight Mommy* are a fine addition to that canon.

Franz and Fiala kick off on a sly note with the most wholesome image of Austrian family togetherness, the Von Trapp children and their stepmother singing a sweet lullaby. The co-directors then jump to a bracing sequence set within the vivid green foliage of a cornfield, where Lukas and Elias (played by brothers Lukas and Elias Schwarz) are in the midst of a vigorous game of tag. The sinister homemade animal mask worn by one of the boys sets up the disturbing, recurring motif of hidden faces.

Cinematographer Martin Gschlacht's lush widescreen images of the surrounding woodlands, lake and fields, shot in heightened colors that practically sing, establish the isolation of the gorgeous setting. They also provide a sharp contrast with the ultra-modern sleekness of the family retreat, a sterile showplace full of overpowering statement art. This is no cozy cottage.

When the boys' mother (Susanne Wuest) returns from extensive facial surgery — her bandaged head makes her look more mummy than Mommy — she seems a stranger to them. Where once she was affectionate, now she's chilly and severe.

Brooding shots of her watching them from behind windows or doors, fractured glimpses of her reconstructed face, or simply a bloodshot eye in the mirror as she changes bandages all feed the audience's suspicions as well as those of the boys.

Childhood games figure throughout (the original title is the German-language equivalent of "I spy with my little eye ..."), but loss of carefree innocence is the key theme. For the most part, the reactions of Lukas and Elias are not those of frightened kids but of cornered prey relying on animal cunning, and where necessary, savagery. The filmmakers manage to funnel a dark, dangerous energy into seemingly fun, boisterous activities like the twins bouncing on a trampoline or running in the woods. Reality and paranoid fantasy begin to blur to mesmerizing effect, as their mother's behavior grows increasingly erratic and the boys turn the tables.

There are plenty of variations on familiar horror tropes here, including some very nasty business with roaches, a graveyard tomb visit, telling nods to Catholicism, a standard childhood science experiment that becomes a torture method, jolting displays of Cronenbergian body horror and what looks like a Damien Hirst art installation involving a stray cat.

However, there's also subtlety and sophistication in the way that Franz and Fiala toy with audience expectations. The use of sound and disquieting music is effective at manipulating the mood within a highly charged atmosphere, alternating between propulsive suspense and transfixing shock, and between images of pastoral serenity with ugliness and violence.

The story's acceleration from anxiety to panic to hellish chaos is expertly managed, but more impressively, so is the control of internal narrative logic. As each piece of the puzzle gradually comes together, starting well into the film with the reason for the mother's surgery, a mental replay of everything that's happened up to that point makes consistent sense.

Well-timed appearances by minor characters from outside the family unit — the weirdo village sexton, the priest, a local farmer, two Red Cross charity collectors — add to the tension as well as to the subversive humor. But it's the three terrific central performances that are crucial to *Goodnight Mommy*'s effectiveness, not least in the way the boys appear to grow older, harder and more physically menacing as events progress. The intense concentration on primordial mother-child ties, their steady perversion and the psychological damage of withheld love makes this film riveting and visceral.

Sales *Films Distribution*
Cast *Susanne Wuest, Lukas Schwarz, Elias Schwarz, Hans Escher, Elfriede Schatz*
Directors *Veronika Franz, Severin Fiala*
99 minutes

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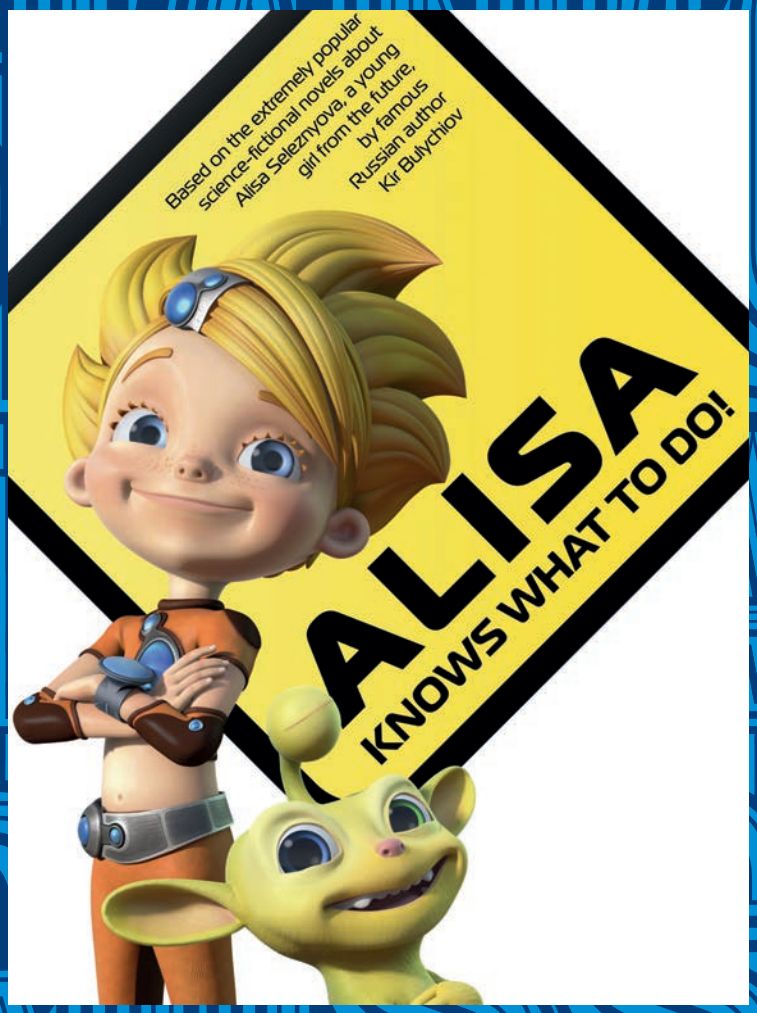
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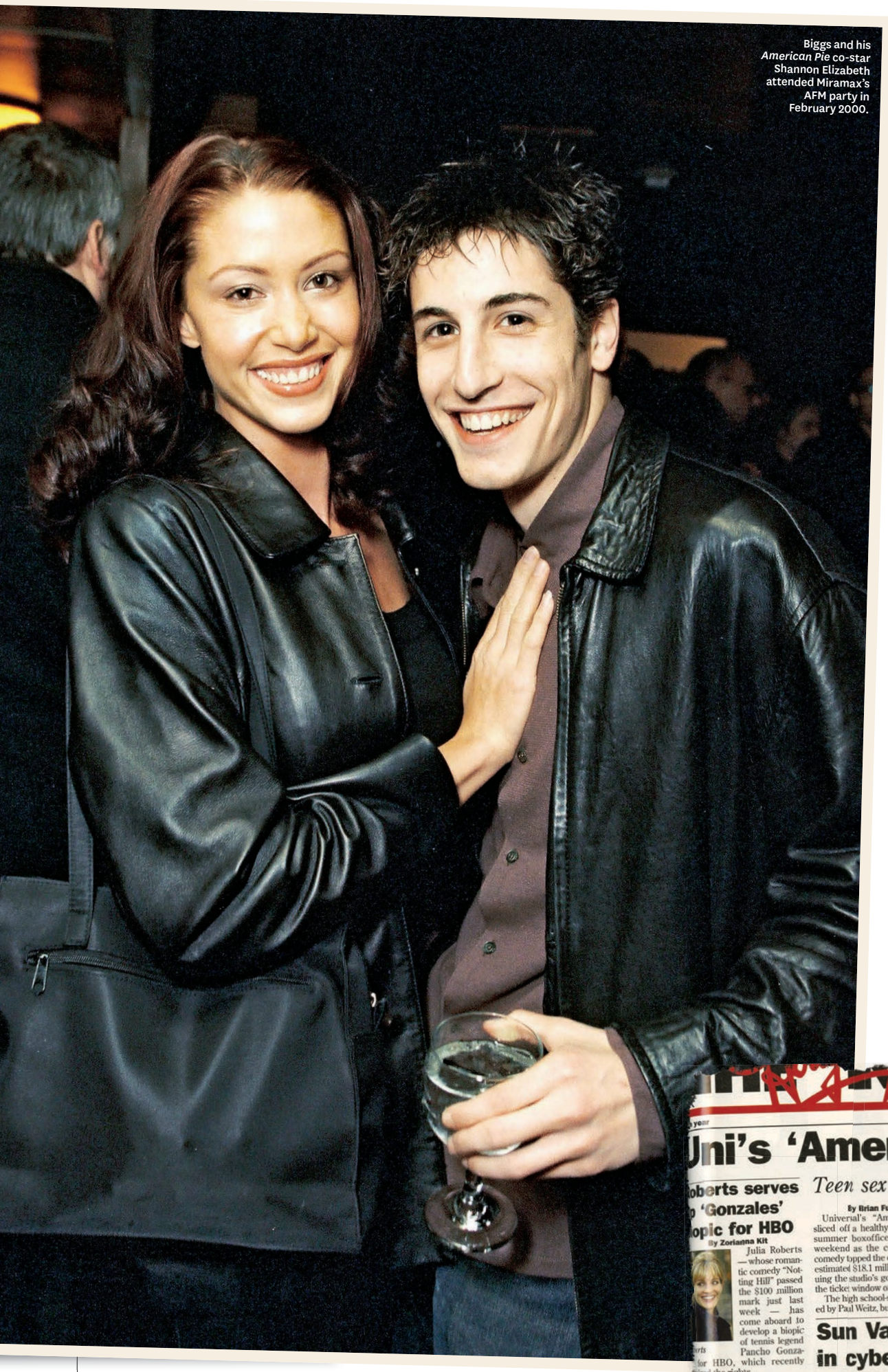

Biggs and his *American Pie* co-star Shannon Elizabeth attended Miramax's AFM party in February 2000.

Jason Biggs: Forever Proud of *Pie*

THERE'S ALWAYS ONE SCENE in an actor's career that forever will define them. For Marilyn Monroe, it's the unforgettable subway grate moment in *The Seven Year Itch*; for Paul Newman, it's *Cool Hand Luke*'s eggs; and for Jason Biggs, it involved a pan of apple pie. Though Biggs had entered show business as a child actor at the age of 5, it wasn't until the New Jersey native turned 19 that he landed a major film role, that of the awkward and naive Jim Levenstein in 1999's *American Pie* who has a very close encounter with the titular pie. When the R-rated film's red band trailer first was released, the public got a taste of what would come to be an international box-office hit. "It really got people talking. Before the movie even came out, people started recognizing me on the streets," Biggs tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "I was like, 'Man, this could really be something.' " In 2000, just a year after the success of *American Pie* (which grossed more than $235 million worldwide and spawned three sequels and four spinoff films), the actor worked with *Clueless* director Amy Heckerling on the teen comedy *Loser* and attended the American Film Market for Miramax's *Boys and Girls*. Now a married father of one son and a regular on Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*, the actor, 36, credits his risque sense of humor as the driving force behind his early career. "For the pie scene, people asked if I read the script and said, 'Oh my god, do I have to do that?' " Biggs recalls. "No — I said, 'I hope that's me. I hope I get that part.' " — MEENA JANG

a BPI publication

Monday, July 12, 1999 $1.85 (California) $2.65 (Elsewhere)

Uni's 'American Pie' cooks

Teen sex comedy continues studio's comeback

oberts serves 'Gonzales' opic for HBO

By Zorianna Kit

Julia Roberts — whose romantic comedy "Notting Hill" passed the $100 million mark just last week — has come aboard to develop a biopic of tennis legend Pancho Gonzales for HBO, which recently

By Brian Fuson

Universal's "American Pie" sliced off a healthy piece of the summer boxoffice action this weekend as the coming-of-age comedy topped the charts with an estimated $18.1 million — continuing the studio's good fortune at the ticket window of late.

The high school-set tale, directed by Paul Weitz, bumped Warner Bros.' high profile "Wild Wild West" out of the top position, carrying on the summer trend of a new No. 1 picture every weekend. Since the official beginning of the summer boxoffice season on Memorial Day weekend, 20th Century Fox's "Star Wars: Episode One — The Phantom Menace" has been the only film that's been able to hold the top spot for two consecutive frames.

"Wild Wild West" moved into the second spot as it slipped a relatively moderate 40% compared with the first three days of its four-day holiday frame, a drop similar to another Will Smith starrer, Sony's "Men in Black," which was down

Sun Valley summit ends in cyberspace serenade

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